

63. (New) The food package tray of claim 62 wherein said annular collar includes downwardly extending tabs that are bonded to said inner surface along said side wall.

64. (New) The food package tray of claim 62 wherein said collar is directly bonded to said side wall.

65. (New) The food package tray of claim 62 wherein said collar includes tabs that are fastened to said inner surface along said side wall.

66. (New) The food package tray of claim 62 wherein said tray and collar comprise paperboard cutouts.

67. (New) The food package tray of claim 62 wherein said liner film comprises a multi-layer plastic film including an oxygen barrier layer of polyvinyl alcohol, a sealing layer of peelable polyethylene, and an adhesive layer of modified polyethylene that comprises a copolymer of ethylene with 6% methacrylic acid that is 50% neutralized with sodium or zinc ions.

68. (New) The food package tray of claim 62 wherein the liner film has a thickness in the range of 100-150 μ m.

69. The food package tray of claim 62 wherein said cavity is sealed by a lid film bonded to said peripheral flange.

70. (New) The food package tray of claim 69 wherein said lid film is formed by a multi-layer plastic film having on the side facing the tray a peelable plastic layer of polyethylene, at least one oxygen barrier layer of polyvinyl alcohol overlying the polyethylene layer, and a covering thermal barrier layer of polypropylene.

71. (New) The food package tray of claim 62 wherein the tray and the collar are of recyclable multi-layer paperboard.

72. (New) The food package tray of claim 71 wherein the paperboard comprises a cover layer facing the outside of the package and having a printable first surface structure and an inside layer having a second surface structure for bonding to said liner film.

73. (New) The food package tray of claim 72 wherein the inside layer is of recycled paperboard.

74. (New) A method for gas-tight packaging of food comprising the steps of: providing a tray having an inner surface, a peripheral side wall and a peripheral flange extending outwardly from the side wall, the flange being formed by an annular collar that is bonded to the side wall; transporting aligned rows of trays through a forming station wherein a liner film is bonded to said inner surface and said flange; transporting the lined trays through a tray loading station wherein the trays are loaded with food; and transporting the loaded trays through an evacuating and sealing station wherein the interior of the trays is evacuated and a sealing film is bonded to the flange over the tray.

75. (New) The method of claim 74 wherein the step of lining the trays is carried out by tacking a multi-layer plastic liner film to said flange followed by forming the plastic liner film downwardly into the tray.

76. (New) The method of claim 74 wherein the plastic liner film includes a gripping portion along the tray flange and the trays are transported by gripping the gripping portion.

77. (New) The method of claim 74 wherein the liner film is heated and formed into the trays by providing a pressure difference on opposite sides of the liner film, and said liner film is heat bonded with the interior surface of the trays and with the peripheral flange.

78. (New) Apparatus for gas-tight packaging of food in trays having an inner surface, a peripheral side wall and a peripheral flange extending outwardly from the side wall, the flange being formed by an annular collar that is bonded to the side wall, the apparatus comprising: a first module having a forming station, a loading station and an evacuating station; a transport device for transporting the trays past the forming, loading and evacuating station; a second module upstream of the first module and including a tray feed device for feeding trays to the first module; the first and second modules overlapping in the direction of tray transport.

79. (New) The apparatus of claim 78 wherein the first module includes a tack welding station upstream of the forming station; and a transfer station between the first and second modules beneath the tack welding station.

80. (New) The apparatus of claim 79 wherein the transfer station includes a vertically movable lifting device that engages the peripheral flange on the trays, the tack welding station including a tack welding body vertically movable in a direction opposite to the direction of movement of the lifting device, and a plastic liner film supply device for positioning a liner film over a tray peripheral flange for tack welding to the flange.

81. (New) The apparatus of claim 80 including a heating device that heats the tack welding body to tack weld the liner film to the tray peripheral flange.

82. (New) A method for assembling a food package tray comprising the steps of: forming a cutout blank having a bottom and side walls; bending the side walls relative to the bottom to form a peripheral side wall; positioning an annular collar on the side wall; and bonding the collar to the side wall to provide the tray with an outwardly extending peripheral flange.

83. (New) The method of claim 82 wherein said side walls are bent in a first mold and said collar is positioned on said side wall in a second mold.

84. (New) The method of claim 82 wherein said step of bonding is carried out by bonding with a cold adhesive.

85. (New) The method of claim 82 wherein the step of bonding is carried out by bonding with a hot melt adhesive.

86. (New) A tray having a peripheral side wall and a peripheral flange extending outwardly from said side wall, said flange being a separate annular collar that is fastened to said side wall.

87. (New) The tray of claim 86 wherein the tray has an inside surface and said collar includes tabs that are fastened to said inside surface along said side wall.

88. (New) The tray of claim 86 wherein said tray is a paperboard cutout.

89. (New) The tray of claim 86 wherein said tray has a bottom and said side wall is outwardly inclined from said bottom toward said collar.

90. (New) The tray of claim 86 including a bottom integral with said side wall, said bottom having a polygonal peripheral shape.

91. (New) The tray of claim 86 wherein said side wall has outwardly extending side wall flange segments and said collar is fastened to said side wall flange segments.

92. (New) The tray of claim 86 including a bottom integral with said side wall, said bottom and side wall defining a cavity having a cavity inner surface, and said cavity inner surface and said collar being lined with a liner film.

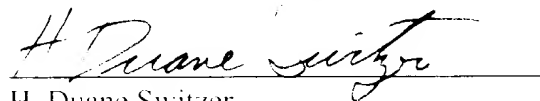
93. (New) The tray of claim 92 including a lid film bonded to said collar for sealing said cavity and forming a food package.

94. (New) The tray of claim 86 wherein said tray has an inner surface, and a plastic liner film overlying and bonded to said inner surface and said collar.

95. (New) The tray of claim 86 wherein said collar is fastened to an inwardly facing surface of said side wall.

96. (New) The tray of claim 86 wherein said collar is fastened to an upwardly facing surface of said side wall.

Respectfully submitted,



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